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To: 'microsoft.atr(a)usdoj.gov'
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Subject: MICROSOFT SETTLEMENT

The vast majority of the national news media, let alone the American citizenry, has not understood the ramifications of the anti-trust case against Microsoft, let alone the "settlement" offered therefrom.

We are rapidly moving to a position, as a nation, where the vast majority of major large corporations as well as small businesses are becoming dependent on Microsoft and the Windows operating system and associated products (Office, Internet Explorer).

This is not merely the old "Beta vs. VHS" argument, but the complete obviating of all corporate responsibility to Microsoft. Microsoft has shown complete contempt for the U.S. Government and people of the United States. Witness the latest changes to the cost of licensing Microsoft products. Once they've got all the operating system and desktop application business in their court, they'll be able to make any changes to the software and/or pricing they so desire - completely relieving corporate America of any fiduciary responsibility to shareholders, employees or customers.

Microsoft didn't "invent" Windows or the use of the mouse as a graphic-input device, yet it has a defacto monopoly of the desktop operating system. We've seen how, in the absence of innovation by Microsoft, they purchase companies that actually do innovate - then proceed to bastardize the acquired product/company until the end-user no longer remembers when a product used to be good. (The Windows XP operating system is a good example: it now includes a rudimentary raster image processing/editing tool for the digital photographer, which will naturally prevent the sales of better software by highly specialized companies - since XP is including the barely passable version for free.)

Inevitably, Microsoft will be able to monitor the desktops of corporate America and perhaps even use "push" technology to advance its own agenda. In other words, Microsoft will eventually control our economy and the majority of our lifestyle based on the whims of Mr. Gates & Co.

I don't wish to sound alarmist, but even in its heyday, IBM couldn't be blamed for trying to control as much of the American economy and lifestyle as Microsoft eventually will.

The settlement of having Microsoft provide software and hardware to school districts actually plays right into the hands of Microsoft - at the expense of Apple, which has done a much better job of courting the school-age computer users. What better way to encourage the uninterrupted continuation of the Microsoft monopoly than by getting them "hooked" at a young age in the schools?

I am neither a proponent nor an opponent of the PC or the Mac. I just wish someone, somewhere would realize what all the fuss was about in the first place: Microsoft stifles competition and innovation. That's the truth. And just 'cause Microsoft sells Windows, Word, Access, Internet Explorer - doesn't mean those are the best products. They're just the cheapest and the easiest for the vast majority of average Americans to operate. Henry Ford performed a similar "service" with the automobile in the early years of that industry - but he didn't stifle competition and buy out competitors just to put them out of business. The American Public wouldn't have stood for that.

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